



The Bethel Courier.

VOLUME X, NUMBER 4

WINTER 1986

BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

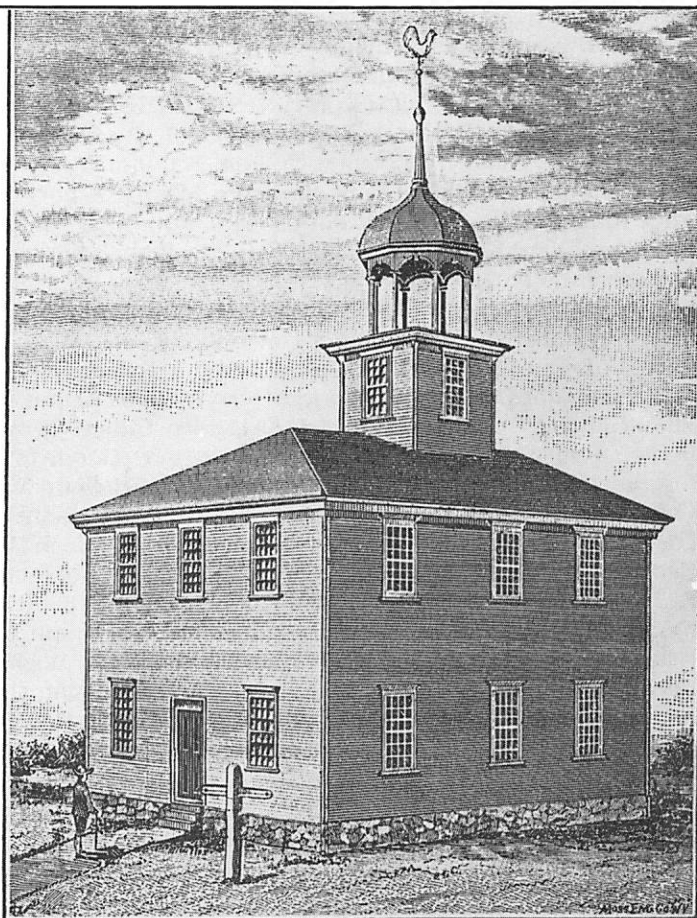
1986 ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN

RAISES NEARLY \$7,000

Over three hundred (312) individuals and businesses responded to the 1986 Endowment Campaign, resulting in the raising of nearly \$7000 to be added to the permanent funds of the Society. Much appreciation is expressed to the following for their generous support:

Roger & Nancy Adams, Simsbury, CT, in memory of Ruth Dorion; Bill & Pat Allen, Bethel, in memory of Richard Allen; Olive Anderson, Newry, in memory of George Lehrian; Ordell H. Anderson, Washington Depot, CT, in memory of Betty Browne Anderson; Ernest & Alberta Angevine, Bethel; J. Maynard Austin, Bennington, VT, in memory of Henry P. & Ava Austin; Jean M. Bahnt, Freeport, in honor of Maine Federation of Women's Clubs; Arthur E. Barker, Stafford Springs, CT; Jean MacArthur Barker, Delray Beach, FL, in memory of Marjorie MacArthur Noll; Clarence A. Bartlett, Nashua, NH, in memory of Martha Bartlett; Keith B. & Suzanne S. Bartlett, Bethel; Urban & Neda R. Bartlett, Bethel; John & Mary Beth Bayerlein, Bethel; Ruth T. Bean, Springfield, VT, in memory of Arthur Bean; Lois B. Beaudoin, Berlin, NH, in memory of John and Emma Jane (Bean) Peabody; Lester & Bessie Bennett, Rumford; Randall H. Bennett, Bethel, in memory of the Heath family, early settlers of Gilead and Bethel, ME; Bethel Auto Sales, Inc., Bethel; Bethel Furniture Stock, Inc., Bethel; Bethel Savings Bank, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Lewis P. Bissell, Jackson, NH; Lillian K. Bomhoff, Bangor, in memory of Lilla T. Morgan & Ethel Bisbee; Otto & Kaye Blosssey, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, in memory of Clayton L. Blake; Florine E. Bowden, Esmond, RI; Dorothy F. Brinck, South Paris; Lois L. S. Brinks, Santa Clara, CA, in honor of the Stanley family; Carl & Lettie Brooks, West Paris; Bernice E. Brown, Rumford Center, in memory of Albert H. Brown; James L. & Beatrice B. Brown, Bethel; John K. Brown, Bethel, in memory of Carl L. Brown, Ruth Mason Brown, Robert Mason Brown & Addie Kendall Mason; Julia B. Brown, Bethel; Leland & Barbara Brown, Bethel; Marie C. Brown, Bethel; Maxine C. Brown, Bethel; Richard & Doris Brown, Bethel; Gurdon S. Buck, Watertown, MA; Dr. Richard & Catherine Bush, Belmont, MA; Guy P. & Nancy Butler, Millinocket, in memory of many happy years in Bethel; Evelyn M. Caillouet & Kay McMillin, Bethel, in memory of "Mush" McMillin; Donald W. & Mary S. Calderwood, Mesa, AZ, in memory of P. Sheridan Chapman; Lee F. Carroll, Gorham, NH; Elizabeth Mason Carter, West Bethel in memory of Eugenia Haselton; Harold W. Chandler, Live Oak, FL, in honor of the 1914 Class at Gould Academy; Steven C. & Lynda H. Chandler, Bethel; Daphne A. Chapman, Peabody, MA, in memory of Philip S. Chapman, Jr.; Frank & Rosalind R. Chapman, Bethel; Donald & Dorothy Christie, Gray; Dr. Donald Christie, Jr., Poughkeepsie, NY; Isobel T. Coburn, New Harbor, in memory of Gilbert W. Tuell; Frances (Ellen) Coffin, Norway, in memory of N. Eugene Burns; Carolyn M. Colby, Bethel, in

(continued on page 2)



Portland's Cumberland County Courthouse of 1785, which served as the model for Bethel's first meetinghouse, built in 1807.

BETHEL'S FIRST MEETINGHOUSE RE-DISCOVERED

By Randall H. Bennett

Thanks to the research and writing efforts of Leonard Bond Chapman (1834-1915), a Deering (now Portland), Maine, historian and descendant of early Bethel settlers, we now have the first detailed picture of Bethel's first meetinghouse, a wooden structure which stood near the south (Bridge Street) end of the present Androscoggin River bridge from 1807 to 1848. Chapman recorded numerous details at Bethel's (and Oxford County's) past in a series of articles in *The Oxford County Citizen* between 1909 and 1914.

Mentioned briefly in Dr. Nathaniel T. True's newspaper column "History of Bethel" (1859-1861), which appeared in the town's first newspaper, *The Bethel Courier*, and again in Dr. William B. Lapham's *History of Bethel* (1891; reprinted 1981), this meetinghouse, of major architectural importance to an

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(Endowment Contributors, continued from page 1)

memory of Ethel Grover Mills; Andrew & Mary Lou Cole, Norwood, MA, in memory of Eva Chapman & Julia Cole; Howard & Virginia Cole, Bethel; Evelyn R. (Walker) Collins, New Cumberland, PA, in memory of James Walker; Wilfred G. & Eleanor Conary, Bethel, in memory of Howard T. Brown; Rupert & Eva Conroy, Auburn, in memory of Sylvia Conroy; Edgar A. & Miina K. Coolidge, Quincy, MA, in memory of Wallace & Lilia Coolidge; Clayton & Lola Crockett, Bethel; Elsie E. Davis, Bethel; L. Adeline Dexter, Bethel; Mary E. Dooen, Bethel, in memory of Ruth Wilkinson; Dorothy D. Foster Dorr, W. Boothbay, in memory of Enoch Foster; Dana & Barbara Douglass, Bethel; Elmira Doyen, Bethel, in memory of Jesse H. Doyen; John H. & E. Marie Dudley, Rumford Center; Hugh & Mariann Durgin, Bethel, in memory of John E. Grover; Rodney & Kathryn Eames, Cape Elizabeth; Donald & Edith Eddy, in memory of Marjorie Noll; George & Sylvia Ellis, Andover; Lucretia B. Evans, Bronx, NY, in memory of Moses Mason Robinson; Dr. George H. Eypper, Grafton, MA, in memory of Edith H. Eypper; Raymond Fales, Braintree, MA, in memory of Alice Kimball Fales; Walter & Phyllis Fales, Royal Oak, MI, in memory of Alice Kimball Fales; Edna E. Fallon, Bethel; Norman & Barbara Ferguson, Hanover; Frank L. & Suzan K. Flint, Fairfield, CT, in memory of Beatrice & Cecil Conrad & General James Alger; Charles B. Fobes, Portland; Albert Foster, Bethel; Myra M. Foster, Bethel, in memory of David S. Foster; Guy & Madeleine Gibbs, Bethel, in memory of Jerry A. Gibbs; Arthur & Ruth Gilbert, West Bethel; Shirley & Marilyn Gilbert, West Bethel; Paul & Thersa Given, New Gloucester; Goodwin's Insurance, in honor of William Bingham II and Howard W. Cole; Celia K. Gorman, Bethel; Ralph & Marion Hall, Bethel; Francis & Lillian Grant, Gorham, in memory of Joseph A. Hamblen, Sr.; Ruth & Jaime Grover, Bethel, in memory of John E. Grover; Agnes Haines, Bethel; Floribel Haines, Bethel; Mildred C. Hanscom, So. Portland, in memory of Frank E. Hanscom, Jr.; Frances S. Harding, Bryant Pond; Carolyn Wight Harrison, Spindale, NC, in memory of Elizabeth E. Wight; Dr. John H. & Cathy E. Hart, Bangor, in memory of Edith K. Howe; Charles S. Haselton, Bangor, in memory of Eugenia M. Haselton;

EDITOR'S CORNER

This issue of the COURIER marks the tenth year of its existence. It was begun rather modestly in December 1976 with six pages, featuring major articles on the history of the Bethel Historical Society and Chester Harding, the famed 19th century portrait artist who painted the portraits of Dr. Mason and his wife Agnes. The name of this publication was inspired by a newspaper published in Bethel between 1858 and 1861. Throughout the next thirty two issues, a wide variety of subjects have been discussed relating to the history of western Maine and the White Mountains. The COURIER has also been the means to bring news of Society activities to its membership, scattered about the United States and Canada. For the first four years of its existence, the COURIER was published twice a year, but in June 1980 it became possible to make it a quarterly, which has been the case since that time. Thumbing through the back issues, one is reminded of many things, but perhaps the most significant is all the kind words and positive responses that the COURIER has elicited from its many faithful readers. There are many subjects to be covered in future issues and we look forward to bringing them to you.

SRH

Collwyn F. & Judith E. Haskell, Bethel; Edward H. Hastings, Bethel, in memory of Walter E. Scott; Euphemia Hastings, Bethel; Robert & Florence Hastings, Bethel; Florence B. Hathaway, Needham, MA; George O. Hayes & Son Landscaping, Inc., Bryant Pond, in memory of Charlie Day; John B. & Fumiko I. Head, Bethel; Olive A. Head, West Bethel, in memory of Paul Head; Emeline Heath, Bethel, in memory of Archie & Mabel Heath; Charles Heino, Boothbay; Reona Heino, Boothbay Harbor; Dorothea J. Hitzrot, Bethel; Richard L. & Jane W. Hosterman, West Bethel; Clarence W. & Joan W. Howe, Bethel, in memory of Susan Capen; Stanley R. Howe, Bethel, in memory of Albert Skillings, James D. Alger and Kimball Ames; W. Sidney Howe, Belfast; Julie Hudson, Monhegan, in memory of Larkin & Julia Hill Danton; Harlan & Gertrude Hutchins, Bethel; Lee & Virginia Hutchins, Bethel; Charlotte K. Johnson, Westford, MA, in memory of Albert L. Johnson; Paul A. & Helen V. Judkins, Dixfield, in memory of Eva Bean; Paul & Jean Kailey, Bethel; Royden & Alice Keddy, Gorham; Earlon & Mary Keniston, Bethel, in memory of Vernon (Tink) Brown; Alden T. & Mabel A. Kennett; Charles & Mary Keoskie, Bethel; Herbert & Ruth Kittredge, Bethel in memory of Laurier Kittredge; Dr. Werner A. & Irene M. Kohlmeyer, Bethel; Karl & Helen Kraul, Portland; Harold M. & Edith M. Lawrence, Portland; Rev. Clifford W. & Elizabeth A. Laws, Kittery Point, in memory of all early Bethelites who helped make the town's history interesting; Daisy M. LeClair, Bethel, in memory of Syl LeClair; E. Louise Lincoln, Bethel; Hazel C. Linnell, Rumford, in memory of Daniel Alfin Coffin & Clare Cole Coffin; Flora M. Locke, Lancaster, CA, in honor of the Lockes of Bethel; Doris O. Lord, Apopka, FL, in memory of Lawrence A. Lord; Stanley & Elizabeth Lord, Bethel; Arlene D. Lowell, Bethel, in memory of Lloyd B. Lowell; Frank A., Sr. & Beatrice F. Lowell, Newry; H. Merrill & Jane B. Luthe, Portland, in memory of Eleanor Sprague; Pearlina McMillin, Bethel, in memory of R. S. McMillin; Marguerite H. McNally, Hampden, in memory of Fred & Gladys Hall; Nancy H. Mercer, Bethel, in honor of Agnes H. Haines; Edward L. & Mary A. Mills, Locke Mills; Marilyn R. Noyes Mollicone, Augusta, in memory of Bernice H. Noyes; James L. & Josephine G. Monahan, Bethel, in Memory of "Mush" McMillin; Patricia Moon, Denver, Co, in memory of Nathan Rice Twitchell; Joan Mooney, Ottawa, Ont., in memory of Maurice Kendall; Helen Morton, Bethel; Herbert H. Morton III, Andover, MA; Norman & Jean Ness, Orono; Hazel H. Newell, Locke Mills, in memory of Mabel S. Greenleaf; George A. & Danna B. Nickerson, Bethel; Herbert E. & Evelyn Nickerson, Bethel, in memory of Larry Patterson; Leslie A. Noyes, Bethel; Margaret Herrick Oakes, Augusta, in memory of Judge & Mrs. A. E. Herrick; Hazel F. O'Donnell, Newtonville, MA, in memory of Wallace Lewis Farwell; Leslie & Christine Otten, Bethel, in honor of Mildred Otten; Marvin T. & Trijntje Ouwinga, Bethel; Elizabeth B. Overton, Brooklin, in memory of Dr. Timothy Carter, Frances Carter & Lawson Carter; Earlon & Mary Paine, Bethel; John W. Palmer, East Stoneham; Harry & Eleanor Parsons, Bethel, in memory of Thomas F. Vail; Eric & Karen Paul, Bethel, in memory of Eva Bartlett Swan; Mr. & Mrs. Herbert E. Pickett, Old Saybrook, CT, in memory of Kimball Ames; Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence K. Pickett, Skaneateles, NY, in memory of Kimball Ames; Archibald T. & Persis G. Post, Newry; Dr. Majic S. & Jeanette S. Postsaid, Hanover, MA; Betty Prescott, Bangor; Anthony & Eleanor Pugliese, Bethel; Kenneth & Sarah Ramage, Bethel; Richard D. Rasor, Bethel, in memory of Charles Kennedy; Marian K. Rich, Roanoke, VA; John V., Jr. & Anne K. Richardson, Athol, MA, in memory of Jonas Hastings & Apple (Baker) Hastings; Col. Arthur & Elinor Ritchings, Petersburg, NJ; Beatrice R. Ritter, Torrington, CT; Emily C. Saunders, Bethel; Robert & Linda Saunders, Bethel; Margaret M. Sawyer, Waterford; Dorothy G. Schmidt, Augusta, in memory of Hazel G. Wheeler; Dr. Charles N. & Edith W. Seashore, Washington,

DC; Roxanne T. Sly, Brooklin; Leslie & Elizabeth Smith, Bethel; Eugenia M. Spalding, Tewksbury, MA, in honor of Marjorie Cummings & Grace Buck; E. P. & Grace N. Stanley, Mount Hood, OR; John P. & Paula J. Stanley, Big Lake, MN; Clyde A. & Bertha Stevens, Bethel; Randal & Sarah Stevens, Bethel; Dr. Robert B. & Joanne Peabody Stewart, Kalamazoo, MI, in memory of William Welcome Peabody; Dexter M. & Janet E. Stowell, Bethel; George P. & Mary L. Stowell, Falmouth; Robert & Violet Swain, East Andover, in memory of Lucie Morse Swain; Glenn E. Swan, Mexico; Douglas M. Swett, East Conway, NH; Ruth Tag, Hackettstown, NJ, in memory of Kimball Ames; Robert T. Tewksbury, Kerville, TX; David D. & Irma H. Thompson, Bethel, in memory of Dawn E. Thompson; Margaret Joy Tibbetts, Bethel in memory of W. Ashby Tibbetts & Mary Tibbetts Freeman; Don & Peggy Tobin, Bandera, TX, in memory of Nathan Rice Twitchell; Dr. John & Margaret Trinward, Bethel; Edmond J. & Sudie L. Vachon, Bethel; Frank A. & Janet Vogt, Bethel, in memory of Mrs. Harriet Shepard; James A. Walker, Crestview, FL, in memory of James Freeman Walker; Margaret S. Ward, King of Prussia, PA, in memory of the Wallace Lewis Farwell family; Elizabeth D. Whiteman, Elkins Park, PA; Claus & Jakki Viese, Bethel; Daniel M. & Rosalie T. Wight, Rumford; Ruth W. Wight, Bethel; Willard A. & Sylvia B. Wight, Newry, in memory of Fred & Ida Wight; Richard & Virginia Williamson, Upton, in memory of Esther Williamson; Dennis & Rita Wilson, Bethel; Lucia V. Wilson, Gorham, NH, in memory of Al & Emma VanDenKerckhoven; Edleen Winslow, Bethel, in memory of Esther Williamson; Edna M. York, Bethel, in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Herbert I. Bean; Archie L. & Jane B. Young, Bethel, in memory of Dale C. Thurston; Douglas & Robin Zinchuk, Bethel; James A. Walker, Crestview, FL, in memory of James Freeman Walker.

(*First Meeting House, continued from page 1*)

Understanding of Bethel's early social and religious development, was both an important structure in northern Oxford County as well as a holdover from much earlier, eighteenth century meetinghouse and church types used in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In addition to furnishing a written account of this historic structure, Chapman makes note of the Maine building which served as the model for the Bethel meetinghouse -- the Cumberland County Courthouse (1785-1816), illustrated opposite page 499 in the work *Portland In The Past* (1886) by William Gould. Fortunately, the Society has within its library holdings a copy of this book, and the view published herein appears for the first time in its western Maine context.

Constructed when Bethel's population was scattered throughout the town, with minor building clusters near what is now Mill Hill and the common at Middle Intervale, the first "West Parish Congregational Meetinghouse" was built under the supervision of Major Amos Hills, an early settler, justice of the peace, and "house carpenter" who once resided just west of the present Dooen (formerly "Bethel Inn") Farm off Route 2. Chapman, in his *Citizen* articles, supports the brief account of the meetinghouse contributed by Dr. N. T. True to the *Report of the Centennial Celebration at Bethel, August 26, 1874*, one which describes the building as nearly square, hip-roofed, and surmounted by a cupola with a tall pole and wooden rooster. The twentieth *Citizen* articles, however, go far beyond the meager accounts of the previous century.

The location of the meetinghouse, an issue since October 1798, when the legal voters in the West Parish (formed, along with an "East Parish," in 1796) assembled 'to determine upon a place to set a meetinghouse,' was finally resolved in September 1806. At that time land for "a Common on which to erect a meetinghouse" was purchased from John Stearns, whose farm

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Elsewhere in this issue is found the 1987 schedule of monthly meetings. Once again it appears that a wide variety of topics will be offered and I would like to thank the Program Committee for their fine work in planning such an interesting assortment. The Society attempts to appeal to the many diverse interests of its membership as well as to the general public and our attendance at monthly meetings continues to hold up well. There seems to be an infinite number of program possibilities for local historical societies and interest in archaeology, genealogy, local lore, crafts and architecture is particularly strong. I am certain that if any member has particular suggestions for programs he or she wishes to recommend that the Program Committee would give them serious consideration.

Alden T. Kennett

ran along the south bank of the Androscoggin from present-day Bridge Street to Mill Brook.

Based on contemporary written records, as well as the memories of those Bethel residents who could still recall this "ancient Congregational meetinghouse," Chapman wrote in July 1909 a detailed account of its physical appearance, which, through lack of criticism in the paper's columns, may be considered highly accurate (the only exception taken -- noted in Chapman's column of November 3, 1910 -- was that the Bethel building had more windows than shown in the *Portland* view). Quoting a letter written by Amos Hills, January 12, 1807, to relatives in Newbury, Massachusetts, Chapman writes, "We are about building a meeting house in our parish next summer. I have agreed with another man to frame and finish the outside. It is to be 40 x 60 feet, with a singing loft across one end." Continuing with his own description, Chapman writes:

The building was fashioned after the Cumberland County Court House that stood where the Portland City hall ruins are now seen, corner of Congress and Myrtle streets. . . It was two story, hip-roof, belfry and liberty-pole which was surmounted by a wooden rooster -- symbolical of something that has not been explained in print -- more indicative in the use by a court of justice perhaps than a church society. The first floor was an open hall where the whipping post and gallows were exposed to view when not in use, the second was used for a court assembly and office rooms, necessitating two rows of windows around the entire structure. . . Such in brief is the history of the building of which the old Bethel West Parish meeting house was a facsimile . . .

From an outside view the double row of windows in the Bethel building indicated a gallery all the way around but the front end only contained one which was over the entry, the pulpit being in the opposite end. The pews were of the box pattern, paneled all around with entrance doors made to fasten upon the inside. The seats were in two parts and constructed so as to turn up if required when occupants stood. As large families were the rule then, all the available space in a pew was utilized, so a short seat was constructed at one side of the door and at the opposite end another. Occupants of the short seats would sit facing each other, and when seating themselves after standing, the noise of the dropping of the seats partook somewhat of a fusillade of India crackers in the hands of the boys, July 4th. The outside of the structure was painted yellow at the time of erection but the inside ever remained in its natural color.

(continued on page 4)

SOCIETY SALES DEPARTMENT

(First Meeting House, continued from page 3)

The Society maintains a selection of modestly priced gifts and historical publications. These may be ordered at the prices listed below. Maine residents should include 5% sales tax. Orders under \$10 should include \$1 for postage and handling; those over \$10 but under \$20 should include \$2 and all those over \$20 should include \$3 for postage and handling.

Moses Mason House Tile \$3.50
Stationery (package of ten sheets and ten envelopes) \$2 each

Moses Mason House
Summer House
Bethel Railroad Station

Booklets

"Bethel's Broad Street" 75¢
"The Family Farm" 75¢
"Made in Bethel" 75¢
"Dr. Moses Mason and His House" \$1
"Molly Ockett" \$2

Maps and Atlases

1880 Map of Bethel Hill \$2
1880 Map of Entire Town (Bethel) \$2
1878 Bird's Eye View of Bethel Hill \$1
1858 Atlas of Oxford County \$6.50

Wood Tote (canvas) (Moses Mason Museum logo) \$12.50

Tote Bag (Moses Mason Museum logo) \$7.50

Placemats, 4 Season (set of four) \$7.50

Special Editions

Bethel Citizen (1974) \$1
Indian Raid '81 \$1

Books

William B. Lapham, HISTORY OF WOODSTOCK, MAINE \$19.95
Holt, GRAND TRUNK LINES OF NEW ENGLAND \$24.95
D. B. Wight, WILD RIVER WILDERNESS \$4
Francis Parkman, THE GOULD ACADEMY STORY \$7.50
Ruth Crosby, FROM AN OLD LEATHER TRUNK \$3.50
BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY COOKBOOK \$5
Thomas Hubka, BIG HOUSE, LITTLE HOUSE, BACK HOUSE BARN: THE CONNECTED FARM BUILDINGS OF NEW ENGLAND Paper \$19.95. Cloth \$29.95
William B. Lapham, HISTORY OF NORWAY, MAINE \$55
Silas Maxim & Wm. B. Lapham, HISTORY OF PARIS, MAINE \$45
Jean Lipman, RUFUS PORTER REDISCOVERED \$12.95
A TRUTHFUL LIKENESS: CHESTER HARDING AND HIS PORTRAITS \$25
Paula Wight, NEWRY PROFILES \$5
Eva Bean, EAST BETHEL ROAD \$50
R. H. Bennett, OXFORD COUNTY, MAINE \$18
William B. Lapham, HISTORY OF BETHEL, 1768-1890 \$45

T-Shirts

Moses Mason Museum (Adult) (S,M,L,XL) \$6
Moses Mason Museum (Child's) (4-6-8-10-12-14) \$5
Sudbury Canada 1768-1796 (Adult) (S,M,L,XL) \$6
Sudbury Canada 1768-1796 (Child's) (4-6-8-10-12-14) \$5

Post Cards: Dr. Mason, Agnes Mason,

Moses Mason House 10¢ ea.

Bethel Historical Society Calendar, 1987 \$5

Members of the Bethel Historical Society are entitled to a 10% discount for purchases totaling \$10 or more. Please send orders to the Society at P.O. Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217. They will be sent by return mail.

Though Chapman returns to this first meetinghouse infrequently in future issues of the *Citizen* a reading of many of the early columns places the building's construction in context with the extended rivalry between those Bethel residents who lived at Bethel Hill (nearest the Common) and in the "Valley" (nearest present-day Bridge Street and the Mayville section, north of the Androscoggin River). Indeed, according to Chapman, as early as March 1842 members of the parish (those north of the river having to cross its often unpredictable waters by ferry or fording) were discussing the old meetinghouse's replacement. Eventually the West parish society was to separate into two groups, that of the Hill constructing the present Congregational Church in 1847, and that in Mayville building its own church edifice which was dedicated in December 1849. Of this latter structure, the "Second Congregational Church of Bethel," Leonard Bond Chapman wrote:

The meetinghouse stood a short distance from the northerly end of the bridge over the Androscoggin river, and some of the frame of the old meetinghouse was used in its construction. It was painted white and had a steeple . . . it was sold and during the month of May 1909, demolished, some of the timber going into an addition to the Novelty Works building. (The "Novelty Works" is the present Hanover Dowel Mill.)

Of the first meetinghouse, demolished late in 1848 (and where the Reverend Daniel Gould, among others, preached), Chapman goes on to state, "Sunshine and shower had caused the yellow-colored paint to become unprotecting to the wear of the elements, and the color of the rooster perched high above all his immediate surroundings had become dim, but in other ways the building appeared to the very few who remember it good enough with a few repairs for unborn generations, but the will of the majority, after much discussion at diverse times, appeared by actual account of raised hands to be against its continuance." One of Chapman's informants, Algernon Sidney Chapman (1832-1917), not only provided memories of the old structure, but perhaps the all-important 1807 letter of Amos Hills, A. S. Chapman being his grandson. From the latter, Leonard B. Chapman may also have gleaned the fact that Calvin Twitchell (an uncle to Samuel B. Twitchell, who lived where Society members Barbara and Dana Douglass now reside) had carved the wooden rooster weathervane by hand. (Some readers may recall the recent sale of the more-famous "Portland Weathercock," Bethel's counterpart from the first Cumberland County Courthouse, for an astounding six-figure price.)

The evolution of Bethel's first meetinghouse, from a societal viewpoint, demonstrates the changing position of the Congregational Church--the "orthodox" religious society--in early nineteenth century Maine. Architecturally speaking, it was not at all uncommon, in the days when professional architects were almost non-existent in Maine, to organize a committee which reviewed existing structures that might serve as models. This explains the Portland-Bethel connection (for other local examples of this process, see *Oxford County, Maine; A Guide to Its Historic Architecture*). For the modern researcher, it is truly providential that so much information concerning this particular Bethel structure has been preserved through the writings of the local historian Leonard Bond Chapman.

IN MEMORIAM

Died, December 30, 1986, Flora M. Locke of Lancaster, CA, sustaining member since 1984.



Green Thumb workers Agnes Haines (left) and Mildred Jackson (right) examine a copy of the new edition of EAST BETHEL ROAD (1986), a project that was completed with the assistance of Green Thumb, Inc.

MEMBER PROFILES

Members Agnes Haines and Mildred Jackson are the Society's current Green Thumb workers. Green Thumb, Inc., a federal employment program established in 1965, is funded by the Department of Labor. It provides employment for qualifying older Americans in non-profit agencies where each participant works twenty hours per week. For the Society, the program has been crucial in providing a level of staff support that has allowed it to undertake extensive research and publications projects, produce a variety of finding aids and indexes, and provide important support in the record keeping, collection documentation and museum operations areas.

Agnes Haines is a charter and life member of the Society. Mother of four and grandmother of thirteen, she has been active as a guide in the museum, as a craftswoman at various Society festivals and as a volunteer in many capacities. She has produced a large number of indexes for census records and town histories. She has also carried on extensive research in newspapers, genealogies and town histories. Head of the Society's Genealogical Committee, she has also served many years as a member of the Museum Committee.

Mildred Jackson keeps membership records and address labels up-to-date. She also types letters and forms and assists with the museum store. She serves as typist for Society publications and assists in the research and proofreading of final drafts. She has also worked extensively in putting the Society's newspaper research in manageable form and continues to work on the registration and indexing of its extensive slide collection. She also organizes and oversees the distribution of the COURIER and other Society mailings.

BOOK REVIEW

ON DOING LOCAL HISTORY: REFLECTIONS ON WHAT LOCAL HISTORIANS DO, WHY, AND WHAT IT MEANS. By Carol Kammen. (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1986. Pp. 184. Paper. \$13.50.)

Carol Kammen's book **ON DOING LOCAL HISTORY** provides local historians with a new way of thinking about their work. It also examines the sources they employ and the subjects they research. Local historians are viewed in this work as facing special circumstances since they study, write and

display the history of their communities. This book considers the history of the local history movement and the legacy of that tradition, examining in some detail how local history is practiced today in many parts of the world.

ON DOING LOCAL HISTORY encourages a sense of context, ascertaining whether or not the history investigated is intended for a talk, a display, a book or an article. Local history, according to Kammen, who is a teacher of local history at Cornell University, is shaped by what happened nearby and in the larger world. The book also discusses "a sense of place", the uniqueness of a particular community as compared to those characteristics that make it similar to others. It recognizes that local history is directly related to a community's sense of pride.

Many people associated with museums and historical agencies professionally or as volunteers will find this book of interest for its discussion of the ways local history is used and the various forms in which it has been and can be presented to the public. The text is strengthened by many examples from the author's extensive experience in the field of local and regional history. There are also very extensive notes at the end of each chapter which provide additional sources for further reference and study. **ON DOING LOCAL HISTORY** is well-written, providing a well-rounded perspective on the local historian and his/her work. SRH

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Robert and Suzanne Crane, Bethel, operate a real estate business and own the former Judge Addison E. Herrick house on Broad Street.

Margaret Davis, Bethel, recently retired from teaching, is a long-time guide in the Dr. Moses Mason House Museum.

Harlan and Gertrude Hutchins, Bethel, are retired. She has been active for many years on the Garden and Grounds committee.

BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs 1987

January 1, Annual "So You Think You Know Bethel"; February 5, Randall H. Bennett, Curator of Collections, Bethel Historical Society, "Early Churches and Meeting Houses, in Oxford County", slide lecture; March 5, Annual Historical Film Festival; April 2, "Highlights of Mill Hill's Past", Mary C. Keniston, Treasurer, Bethel Historical Society, slide lecture; May 7, Ben B. Conant, Curator, Paris Cape Historical Society, "Bethel-Paris Connections"; June 4, The Bedards, "Mellie Dunham: Maine Musician"; July 2, Annual Picnic, Stanley R. Howe, Director, Bethel Historical Society, "Dr. Nathaniel Tuckerman True: Bethel Historian"; August 6, Norm Buttrick, Freeport High School, "Survey of Maine Archaeological Sites", slide lecture; September 3, 22nd Annual Meeting, speaker, Dr. Arthur M. Johnson, Chairman, Maine Commission to Commemorate the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, "The Economy and the Constitution"; October 1, Annual "What's It", speaker, Stuart F. Martin, "Oxford County's Vanishing Towns and Villages"; November 5, Geraldine S. Howe, "Bethel's Railroad Street Through the Years", slide lecture; December 3, Annual Christmas Meeting. The annual picnic in July and the pot luck supper preceding the annual meeting will begin at 6:30 P.M. All monthly meetings begin at 7:30 P.M. at the Society's Broad Street headquarters, the Dr. Moses Mason House.



Leslie E. Davis c. 1950. Photo courtesy of Phyllis Davis Dock.

REFLECTIONS ON A HALF CENTURY

by Leslie E. Davis

Editor's Note: Memoirs are undoubtedly the most subjective of historical documents. Usually written long after the events recalled, they can also be self-serving and sometimes misleading; they can, however, record details of the past that can be found nowhere else. The memoir which follows was written in the 1950's by Bethel businessman Leslie E. Davis (1892-1961) and is an especially rich source of insight into another era. Former University of Maine at Farmington dean and history professor Gwilym Roberts read it in 1980 and in a letter to Mr. Davis' daughter Phyllis Davis Dock described the memoir as a "tremendous" resource that "should be published."

Leslie Davis was involved in many phases of life from farm work in the 1890's to the building of an airport and as an aviator in the 1950's. The memoir also provides "an extended memory" since he has recorded details of what his parents remembered. The text has been slightly edited to make clearer the author's intentions and some passages have been deleted to conform to space limitations. The full text, however, for those wishing to read it, is available in the Society's Eva Bean Research Room. Much gratitude is due the children of Leslie and Marie Davis (Richard Davis, Phyllis Davis Dock and Kathryn Davis Hamlin) for permission to publish their father's memoir.

This is the story of the things I remember about my life from the time that memory begins, which in my case was about three years of age. Before I start to put down the things that I recall about my childhood, which after all are usually more interesting to the person telling them than to anyone else, I believe I should write a brief sketch of the family background as it was told to me, and also something about the town in which I was born.

Before the town of Grafton became an organized town, it was designated as Township A; it is situated in the north central part of Oxford County and its western border is the New Hampshire state line.

Two rivers have their beginnings within the limits of the town. Bear River rises at the north end of Grafton Notch and flows south through the Notch, helping to make on its way picturesque places of interest such as Moose Cave, Mother Walker Falls and Gorge, the Jail, and Screw Augur Falls, then

continuing south through the town of Newry to empty into the Androscoggin River at Newry Corner. The Swift Cambridge River has its source on the north slope of Old Speck Mountain and it flows north through the valley which comprised the farms and made up the settlement of Grafton and continues through Upton, joining the Dead Cambridge just before emptying into Umbagog Lake.

I suppose there are different versions as to why a settlement was formed in this valley, but the one that was told to me is the one that I will pass on for what it is worth. This story was told me by Joe Chapman, who lived in Grafton all of his lifetime of eighty-two years except during the last year when he lived at my house in Bethel and died there of cancer on September 7, 1940.

Joe said that his grandfather came there to help cut pine trees for masts for sailing vessels which were being built in the shipyards at Portland on the seacoast. He said that some of the straightest and tallest pines in the state grew in the Cedar Brook valley. He recalled that the shipyards paid one dollar per foot in length for pine trees suitable for masts up to one hundred feet in length and any that were over one hundred feet brought ten dollars per foot for the extra footage over one hundred feet, delivered in Portland. These were logged out in the winter and hauled with oxen, a trip of about ninety miles. The longest one ever gotten out, so the story goes, was one hundred and ten feet long, for which the top price of two hundred dollars was paid, but they had some trouble getting it down through the Notch. It was loaded onto two sleds, one under the butt in front and the other fastened under the smaller end about two thirds of the distance from the butt to the top. They hauled it with sixteen oxen and in going over the tops of some of the hills, the log would drag in the middle so hard that at times both sleds would be off the road in the air, in which case they had to unhook and hook on again near the center and drag it along until it rested on the sleds again.

The first settlers in Grafton were the Beatty's (pronounced Baty) and Brown's, one family of Abbott, Eames, and Smith, plus others whom I have heard of but do not remember. My grandfather Rufus Farrar moved to Grafton from Paris, but I do not know the year, and I do not know the reason for his moving there. I do know he must have moved there when the children were small because I never heard my mother speak of remembering having lived in any other town, and she was the fifth child in a family of eight. My grandfather Farrar had a large farm on the river near the center of settlement and he always had a large herd of livestock, a good flock of sheep and several horses. He liked good horses and usually had one or two good driving horses in addition to his work team. I have only a very faint memory of him and that is of him as a sick man just before he died when I was about four years old. His neighbors have told me things about him such as the fact that he was quite a cattle trader and very shrewd, also that he was a very strict man with his family and required absolute obedience from them.

On the latter score, I recall an incident that was told me about my Uncle Arthur Farrar, who was the next to the oldest boy and lived at home until he was twenty-four or twenty-five years old, and in his prime was one of the strongest men physically that I ever knew. My grandfather Rufus had been in the habit of having his wishes obeyed without question and I understand that if there was any opposition to his wishes that he proceeded to reduce that opposition promptly and at times used a horse whip if necessary.

This particular incident happened when Uncle Arthur was about twenty-two or three years old during haying time; as sometimes happens, Arthur and his father disagreed over some

matter in connection with putting hay in the barn, and Grandfather Rufus told son Arthur that if he couldn't agree to his way that he would horsewhip him until he did. I understand that Arthur told him that he was old enough to be done with that stuff and that he doubted if grandfather was able to give him a horsewhipping, which proved to be the case after the dust had settled in the barn following the fracas. I like to believe that Grandfather was a fair-minded man and recognized the fact that each generation must sooner or later step down for the one that is growing up.

There is one more thing about my grandfather Rufus Farrar that was told me by Aunt "Birdie" (Florence Farrar) since I started writing this story. She told me that he was bound out as a teenage boy to a man in Woodstock, Maine. I believe that the man's name was Cushman. The custom of "binding out" children was a fairly common one in those days. The parents of a large family of children often made a deal with parents of another family who had no children or possibly not more than one or two; the boy or girl, usually a boy, who was fourteen or fifteen years would go and live with, and work for them until the girl was eighteen or the boy twenty one years old. The terms of the agreement were whatever was satisfactory to the parents of the boy or girl and the family with which they were going to live. I think a quite common arrangement was that the parents were to be paid for \$100 to \$300 and the boy was often supposed to receive \$50 or \$100 when his time was out and he was twenty one and on his own. Aunt "Birdie" told me that in my grandfather's case he did a little better than the average; when his time was up, he had a nice driving horse and buggy, a good suit of clothes and a hundred dollars in money.

Aunt "Birdie" also told me that grandfather had been courting the woman who became my grandmother (age sixteen or seventeen at the time) against her parents' wishes, but that when he reached the age of twenty one he persuaded her that he had all they needed to start life together. Such appears to be the case since they were married and brought up a family of eight children.

I have a very fond memory of my grandmother Angelia Farrar whose maiden name was Angelia Whitman, and her mother Delphina Whitman who lived with the Farrar family in Grafton during her later years. Grandmother Farrar was a woman whose even temper and good disposition never seemed to be the least bit ruffled under any circumstances and I understand from what the neighbors have told me that she was the boss

inside the house; I can well believe it, because every time I went there, everything seemed to be just right; she never seemed to be hurried about anything, yet everything seemed to be done when it should be. She always found time to talk and play with her grandchildren; she brought up four boys and four girls and did a good job of it.

She had a stroke when I was about thirteen years old after we had moved from Grafton to Hanover, Maine. She was almost completely paralyzed for more than a year; during the second year of her sickness she learned to walk again and recovered part of her speech. Her oldest daughter, my Aunt Angie Parker, and her family went there to live in order to take care of her until she died.

My great grandmother Delphina Whitman, who lived with Grandmother Farrar all the time I remember, was one of those small, pert and active women. She was only about five feet and maybe one inch or so tall and weighed less than one hundred pounds. I remember being there at grandmother's house one time for Thanksgiving dinner and someone asked great grandmother if her age had nearly caught up with her weight. She lived to be quite a bit over ninety years old; I think around ninety-four, and was in remarkably good health up to the last of her days. My mental picture of her always finds her in a black dress with white collar and white cuffs and always knitting or sewing; she always took time to visit a little with her great grandchildren when we went there, which of course made us feel important.

My mother Cora Estella Farrar was born in Paris, Maine, not too long before the family moved to Grafton, I am quite sure. I shall not tell too much about her here as I plan to pick up our family life in the latter part of this story. She received what schooling she had in the town of Grafton rural school, and her mother did a good job of teaching her to be a successful housekeeper, as she did all of her four daughters. My mother

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was married at the age of twenty and could spin, knit, sew, cook and probably anything else that needed to be done on a farm back in the country at that time; I expect all of her sisters were equally well taught.

I never heard her tell much about her girlhood days, but I do remember her telling about one thing. As a child she said that she played mostly with Uncle Carroll, who was nearest her age, being about a year or so older than she, and it was her ambition to be able to handle him in a squabble; she worked at it until she was able to do so. She and my father were married in April of 1889 and started housekeeping at Mechanic Falls, Maine.

On the whole I would say that the Farrar side of my family furnished me with a pretty good background, and what I have done with it will come out later in this story, if I ever get time to finish it.

Now, I will dig into my memory for a sketch of the Davis side of my family and bring it up to the point where I came into the story. Grandfather Richmond Davis and Grandmother Sarah (True) Davis came to Bethel from Minot, Maine, but I think grandmother's family lived in Poland, Maine. My grandparents moved to a farm on the east side of Waterspout Mountain in Bethel and this farm is now used as a pasture by Ormando B. Farwell since it joined his farm in East Bethel. During this time the family lived on the so-called Conroy place. Here they had two or three very tough years. One year was very dry and has been referred to as the "grasshopper year" by the old timers. The hay crop was very short on account of the drought, and grasshoppers multiplied so fast that they ate up practically all of what grass did grow. Farmers in and around Bethel had to buy hay to carry their stock through the following winter. They found it at Grafton, twenty miles to north since that town had no trouble with grasshoppers, probably due to the fact that it was on the other side of a rather high ridge of mountains.

Coming within a year of the grasshoppers was also the invasion of the pest known as the "Colorado Beetle," which later were just called potato bugs, and which we have with us today, but have learned to control by use of insecticides. When this potato bug invasion first hit the section around Bethel, farmers did not realize how destructive they could be until the damage was already done. Since every farmer planted a patch of potatoes as the main source of his food supply through the winter, this was a serious thing.

Published quarterly by the Bethel Historical Society, Stanley R. Howe, Editor. Please address all inquiries and suggestions to Editor, Bethel Historical Society Publications, Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217.

ISSN 0749-9108



Leslie E. Davis c. 1911

Again Grandfather made a trip to Grafton and behold, not a potato bug in town, and that did it; he promptly sold out in Bethel and moved to Grafton where he lived until he died. It was not long after that that the potato bugs found their way to Grafton, but by that time farmers had learned how to control them. There were also grasshoppers in Grafton, but they never did too much damage as the town always had plenty of rainfall, and grasshoppers thrive best in hot dry seasons.

The farm where Grandfather Davis lived in Grafton was the first one after leaving the Notch heading north and the house was on the right hand side of the road at the top of the first hill above the Notch; it has been many years since any buildings have been standing there.

(To be continued in the next issue)

NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Rebecca Kendall, West Bethel, works for the Greater Bethel Chamber of Commerce.

David and Irma Thompson, Bethel, are retired. For many years he was on the faculty of Gould Academy.

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